



## PREVENTION OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE BIG SKY

### Family Planning: A Public Health Success Story

Improved family planning, the ability to achieve desired birth spacing and family size, was one of the greatest achievements in public health during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> This improvement was closely associated with a decrease in fertility rate, a decline in child mortality, and a markedly better health profile for infants, children, and women. Family planning addresses contraception, infertility, and a wide range of risk behaviors and health conditions that affect reproductive health and chances of having a healthy pregnancy. Almost everyone needs family planning services at some time in their lives to achieve or postpone a pregnancy or to simply address personal health needs. Planned pregnancies benefit individuals, families, and communities. This issue of *Montana Public Health* describes publicly supported family planning services in Montana.

**Family Planning Facts** The following observations provide important perspective about family planning activities.

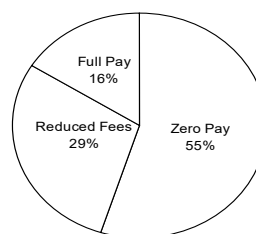
- 44% of pregnancies in Montana are estimated to be unintended.<sup>2</sup>
- Access to contraception is effective in preventing both unintended pregnancies and abortions.<sup>3</sup>
- An average woman wanting two children will spend five years pregnant or trying to get pregnant and roughly 30 years trying to prevent a pregnancy.<sup>4</sup>
- A woman with a planned pregnancy is more likely to have a healthy baby. Women with unplanned pregnancies are less likely to get adequate, timely prenatal care.<sup>5</sup>
- Family planning services provide basic health care, including contraception.

**Access to Family Planning in Montana** Montana ranks 35<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in availability of subsidized services to help women avoid unintended pregnancy.<sup>3</sup> In 2007, an estimated 55,270 women were in need of subsidized family planning services in Montana, 60% of those (more than 33,000) did not receive needed services.<sup>6</sup>

Family planning programs make it easier for individuals and working families to receive the services they need. The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services contracts with 14 family planning delegate agencies with 27 locations in Montana offering comprehensive reproductive health services to those in need. Critical health services are provided regardless of pay; this is especially important in Montana because one out of five residents has no health insurance.<sup>7</sup>

**Family Planning Counts** In 2008, 26,828 men and women in Montana were served at Family Planning clinics (Table). The majority of clients served were low income (Figure).

**Figure: Title X patients, MT, 2008**



It is estimated that 17,310 unintended pregnancies were prevented by these services. These pregnancies would likely have resulted in approximately 11,600 births, 2,400 abortions and 3,100 miscarriages.<sup>8,9</sup>

**Table: Characteristics of clients served in 2008**

Gender	Number	%
Female	25,190	94
Male	1,638	6
Age		
Under 15	311	1
15-17	3,482	13
18-19	3,932	15
20-24	9,204	34
25-29	4,779	18
30-34	2,067	8
35+	3,053	11
Race/Ethnicity		
White (non-Hispanic)	25,111	94
Black (non-Hispanic)	150	<1
American Indian/Alaskan	581	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	172	<1
Hispanic	473	2
More than one race	252	1
Other	89	<1
Total	26,828	100

**Economic Benefits** Family planning prevents costly health and social problems associated with unintended pregnancy. It also reduces:

- Premature births
- Infant mortality
- Teen pregnancy
- The need for abortion
- The spread of infectious diseases
- The incidence of some cancers

In 2008, the average cost of just one pregnancy covered by public assistance was about \$11,320 for the state. This cost was for prenatal care, delivery, and the first year of infant medical care. Nationally, family planning is estimated to save \$4.02 in public dollars for every \$1.00 spent.<sup>10</sup> Montana invests in and saves from these services.<sup>11</sup>

**Recommendations to Montana health care providers:**

- Encourage male involvement in reproductive health with emphasis on clinical services, and responsibility for parenting and pregnancy prevention efforts.
- Provide health education and resources to patients regarding women's health issues.
- Assure quality of care by staying current with clinical guidelines.

*For more information about family planning services, contact Colleen Lindsay, Section Supervisor, Women's and Men's Health at 406-444-3775 or [clindsay@mt.gov](mailto:clindsay@mt.gov)*

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1400 Broadway  
Helena MT 59620-2951  
Anna Whiting Sorrell, Acting Director, DPHHS  
Steven Helgersen, MD, MPH, State Med. Officer  
Jane Smilie, MPH, Administrator, PHSD  
Mail Code: 69077